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Hiding In Plain Sight: Acculturative Stress, Perceived Social Support and Self-Concealment and Amongst Immigrant College Students in the USA.

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Introduction

- Acculturative stress is defined as culture shock.
- Newcomers experience hostility from the host countrymen, and are left with a feeling of “other.” This feeling is called the Acculturation process.
- It occurs when groups and individuals undergo psychological changes when they come into contact with a different culture, (Williams & Berry, 1991).
- Acculturation also occurs to people born in 1st generation countries, (Hughes, 2003; Torres, 2004)
- Social support has been shown to reduce acculturative stress.
- Self-concealment is a product of acculturative stress—the need to hide who you are so you aren’t seen as an outsider.
- Social support may reduce self-concealment.

Current Study

- This study examined the relationships between social support, acculturative stress and self-concealment amongst immigrant college students.

Methods

Participants

This study was conducted at Dominican University San Rafael, where an online survey was sent to 150 students with F-1 and J-1 visa or 1st generation students. Only 34 participants qualified (81.25%) women and (18.75) men. The average age was 25 (SD=4.62), with a range of 18-40. All the participants were undergraduates.

Table 1. Groups by Places of Origin (N =34)

Race					
Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
White	1.00	1	2.94	2.94	2.94
Hispanic	2.00	2	5.88	5.88	8.82
Black	3.00	2	5.88	5.88	14.71
Asian-Pacific Islander	5.00	27	79.41	79.41	94.12
	6.00	2	5.88	5.88	100.00
Total		34	100.0	100.0	

Measures

- **ASSIS-scale (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994).** An 8 question survey that assesses an individuals stress level. Participants were asked to check all answers that applied to their situation. A example re: Perceived Discrimination; Many opportunities are denied to me.
- **PSS-scale (Procidano & Heller, 1983).** Perceived Social Support Scale a 6 question survey Perceived SC-scale stress assessment tool.
- **Self-Concealment Scale (SCS: Larson & Chastain, 1990)** This scale measures self-concealment, defined here, as a tendency to conceal from others personal information that one perceives as distressing or negative.
- **Demographic questions:** age, ethnicity, length of stay in the USA, education level, marital status and if employed or not.
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Hypothesis

H #1 There was a non-significant positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Perceived Social Support, $r = 0.15$, $n = 34$, $p = 0.200$. $p > .05$

H #2 Self concealment was related to acculturative stress ($r = 0.49$, $n = 34$, $p = 0.002$. $p > .05$

H #3 There was a non-significant positive correlation between Perceived Social Support and Acculturative Stress, $r = 0.03$, $n = 34$, $p = 0.429$. $p > .05$

Results

Table 1. Correlations between Acculturative Stress and Perceived Social Support and Self-Concealment.

Correlation – of 3 Variables i.e. Acculturative Stress Index, Perceived Social Support and Self-Concealment-Scale.

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Correlations

		Acculturative Stress Index	Perceived Social Support	Self-Concealment Scale
Acculturative Stress Index	Pearson Correlation	1.00	.03	.49
	Sig. (1-tailed) N	34	.429 34	.002 34
Perceived Social Support	Pearson Correlation	.03	1.00	.15
	Sig. (1-tailed) N	.429 34	34	.200 34
Self-Concealment Scale	Pearson Correlation	.49	.15	1.00
	Sig. (1-tailed) N	.002 34	.200 34	.34

1) There was a significant positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Acculturative Stress, $r = 0.49$, $n = 34$, $p = 0.002$. That is, higher scores on Self-Concealment were correlated with greater Acculturative Stress.

2) There was a non-significant positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Perceived Social Support, $r = 0.15$, $n = 34$, $p = 0.200$.

3) There was a non-significant positive correlation between Perceived Social Support and Acculturative Stress, $r = 0.03$, $n = 34$, $p = 0.429$. That is, higher scores on Self-Concealment were correlated with greater Acculturative Stress.

Discussion

Findings

The purpose of this study was to (a) Identify if family support helped lower acculturative stress and if b) if Self-concealment was related to acculturative stress amongst immigrant college students. The findings found a positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Acculturative Stress, a non-significant positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Perceived Social Support and a non-significant positive correlation between Self-Concealment and Perceived Social Support amongst college immigrant students.

Limitations

- Several limitations must be noted in this study.
- First, all participants were solicited from only one university campus at Dominican University San Rafael, making access to a larger more diverse population difficult.
- Second, perceived social support in the current study, was measured from mainly two perspectives, i.e., support from family & friends. This is a limited view since Support could also come from the larger community the students find themselves in.

Conclusion

- The purpose of this study was to explore the acculturative stress levels amongst immigrant college students; by examining the association between acculturative stress and perceived social support and self-concealment.
- College immigrant students experience high levels of acculturative stress; those with less family support show significantly higher levels of stress.